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REVIEWS.

Altenglisches Elementarbuch von Karl D. Bülbring. Heidelberg: Winter, 1902. I Teil. Lautlehre, pp. xviii, 260.

To write a review at all adequate to the learning packed away in this little volume would require much more space and time than I have at my disposal. Enough, if I can indicate the general features of the work, adding a few notes of misgiving.

As Volume iv of the series planned by Streitberg, Bülbring's work is an attempt to keep Old English in close touch with the general principles and formulas of Germanic philology laid down in Streitberg's *Urgermanische Grammatik*. At every turning point in the discussion of our vowels and consonants we feel that we are marching parallel with kindred languages. This is only as it should be; we feel somewhat less isolated than under the guidance of Sievers. On the other hand, there are some grounds for hesitation.

In the first place, a volume of 230 pages (apart from Preface and Index), devoted solely to vowels and consonants, can scarcely be called 'elementary.' The beginner in O. E. will be in danger of losing himself in this mass of details. Sievers gives to this portion of the subject only 120 pages, and his page, although it looks larger, in reality contains very little more matter.

At page viii Bülbring declares it to be his chief object (*Hauptaufgabe*) to give eine *gleichmässige Darstellung der lautlichen Entwicklung aller altenglischen Dialecte*. In other words, West Saxon, which supplies nine-tenths of the contents of Sievers's grammar, is here to come in for only its share by the side of Northumbrian, Mercian, Kentish. Yet Bülbring has scarcely accomplished this; in fact, I doubt whether any one is likely to accomplish it. As I turn over these pages it seems to me that although Northumbrian, Mercian, Kentish are undeniably treated with far more fullness than in any previous grammar, although they appear in nearly every section instead of being relegated to a few sections by them-

selves (cp. Sievers, §§ 150–167), nevertheless West Saxon still dominates the whole. West Saxon still figures as the type, from which type Northumbrian and Mercian have the air of being departures.

The criticism is not mere theoretical captiousness ; in the face of such scholarly patience mere captiousness would be unpardonable. There are weighty practical considerations not to be overlooked. Our modern English, the literary idiom from the days of the great Elizabethans to the days of the scarcely less great Victorians, not to speak of Chaucer, our English, we are assured, goes back to the Midland dialect, and this in turn goes back to Old Mercian. For the Anglo-American, then, this Mercian ought to be the type and West Saxon the departure. That Mercian is not the type in Bülbring's book is easily explained ; *we have not the material out of which to construct a Mercian grammar in due form*. The remains, such as we find them in the Vespasian Psalter and a few charters for Old Mercian, the Rushworth Matthew, Chad, and the Royal ms. Glosses for Late Mercian,¹ are insignificant by the side of the writings of Aelfred and Aelfric. Of Old Northumbrian our ignorance is even deplorable. The Cædmon hymn will stand, Beda's death song may at least be questioned. The Ruthwell Cross inscription is more than questionable ; see Cook, *Publ. M. L. A.*, xvii, 367–390.

It is evident, then, that for want of material no grammatical treatment of Old West Saxon, Old Northumbrian, Old Mercian can be 'gleichmässig' ; West Saxon will inevitably overshadow the other two.

One may also grumble at Bülbring's frequent use of the term 'patois' (§§ 23, 27 and elsewhere) to designate locutions which differ from standard literary West Saxon. Since Bülbring does not cite examples, one is left to one's recollection of the texts and to conjecture. Certainly nearly all the texts present very queer specimens of phrasing. Still, it seems to me that the term patois introduces into the question an idea which does not belong there. Real patois, for example, the French peasant's *j'avons*, marks the unconscious clod-hopper ; whereas the clumsy phrasings which recur to me in thinking of the *Blickling Homilies* and the like suggest the half-

¹ The Mercian of Beda's *History* has undergone the West Saxon polish.

educated man struggling consciously with something beyond his resources.

A further field for questioning is Bülbring's doctrine of vowel-lengthening before consonant groups. Here our author is not only abreast with Kluge and Morsbach but considerably beyond them. This question of vowel-lengthening bristles with difficulties as we approach it from the Mn. E. side, difficulties which can scarcely be brushed aside with an assumption that lengthened vowels have been re-shortened. Such an assumption savors too much of Kluge's *Rückumlaut*. Certainly I am unable to convince myself that vowel-lengthening was as early as the beginning of the ninth century, or that it was universal. To be safe, we ought to regard lengthening before consonants, like palatalization of the *g*, as a *tendency* rather than as a rule. It works here and there, but not everywhere; its operation can not be gauged accurately by the century, can not even be fixed rigorously to any one dialect. That particular Mercian-Midland dialect from which has come standard Mn. E., although lavish with palatalization, has certainly been chary of lengthening before consonant groups.

What has moved Bülbring, § 77, to say that verb compounds in *mis-* are accented on the prefix I fail to guess. Certainly nothing in Mn. E.; even such nouns as *mistake*, *misfortune* are not thus accented. Only in very long forms like *misunderstand*, *misconception*, do we detect a slight secondary stress on the *mis-*. The only O.E. verbs in *mis-* recorded in Grein are (1) *miscyrrian* Metra ii. 8: *oft ic nu miscyrre cūðe spræce*; the first hemistich is an A-movement, *oft ic nu miscyrre*. (2) *misþēon*, *Rine Song* 58: *steapum eatole misþāh ond eal stand genāg*; assuredly no one would scan *misþāh*. Bülbring's view is of no great consequence in itself; it merely illustrates anew the difficulty that even the trained German ear has in catching the elusive English accent.

Those who wish to compare favorably Bülbring's method with that of Sievers may note the difference of treatment of *a-æ* in § 127 and in Sievers, § 240; or they may note the much more systematic discussion of metathesis, §§ 518–524 (Sievers's remarks are scattered); or the doubling and reduction of consonants, §§ 536–554 (Sievers, §§ 225–231). Also the sections 506–511 on *sc-* are more in touch with M. E. and Mn. E. than Sievers, §§ 206. 2, §§ 75, 76; yet *fixas*, *fixum*, *āscian* still await their final explanation. By the way,

both Sievers, § 206. 3*b*, and after him Bülbring, § 509, Anm. 2*c*, give *sticceo* 'Stücke'; yet the only forms I have found recorded are *stice*, 'stitch,' and *sticca*, 'stick, spoon.' Puzzling is the omission of Skeat's edition of Aelfric's *Saints* from § 27.

The more closely one examines Bülbring's work, the deeper grows one's appreciation of its sterling wealth of research. It is not a book for beginners, and in that sense is not 'elementary'; it is rather for the very advanced. And some of the advanced will doubt one and another of the author's generalizations. Still, it is an immense gain to have these generalizations put boldly and clearly. The further discussion of them can lead only to good.

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The Expression of Purpose in Old English Prose. By Hubert Gibson Shearin, Ph. D. (*Yale Studies in English*, edited by Albert S. Cook, xviii.) New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1903. Pp. vi, 149, and chart.

Dr. Shearin's monograph with the above title is a worthy companion to the best work hitherto done in the field of Old English Syntax.

The author's sight is keen, his grasp is comprehensive; and his youthful eagerness in the pursuit of new facts and novel interpretations is balanced by a modesty in announcing his conclusions which bespeaks unusual maturity and poise. Excellent examples of this modesty are to be found in his continual allowance for 'the personal equation,' and in statements like that about *magan* (p. 106): 'We believe that in the great majority of final clauses where it occurs, it is not to be categorically defined. We have tried to indicate the two extremes that enclose its long line of values. . . . Between those extremes . . . are to be arranged the majority of *magan*-clauses, which arranging each mind must do for itself.' This passage well illustrates the temper of the whole book, and its freedom from dogmatism.

Dr. Shearin has not only read the entire body of Old English literature, but has laid under contribution a great number of collateral